

WHAT IT IS

Getting control of your stress is a critical skill needed to be successful in college. This means understanding the differences between stress and burnout. It means learning to apply some critical success-orientated concepts such as being optimistic, getting enough sleep, staying focused, and avoiding letting things pile up around you.

WHO TO USE IT WITH

Students who are looking to plan for success prior to a difficult situation coming up in front of them. The planning aspect of this worksheet is useful for students attempting to organize their upcoming tasks in a prioritized way to better ensure successful completion.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What are some “good habits” you can think of that will improve your study habits and help you stay on top of assignments that are pending?
2. What are some bad habits that keep you from reaching your goals?

TEACHING INSIGHTS

- **Be optimistic:** Optimism is expecting good things to happen. Encourage students to ask themselves how they view the world. We often create expectations for events in our lives and fail to understand our reactions to disappointment are changeable habits, not locked-in traits.
- **Keep it in perspective:** Our reaction to stress is cumulative. When we are juggling multiple projects or concepts, it is reasonable to get overwhelmed and even have our motivation to progressively work on goals shut down.
- **Get enough sleep:** While it is tempting to stay up late or get up early to complete overdue tasks, it's not healthy to burn the candle at both ends. On average, we should be getting close to eight hours of sleep to be functional and at our best. Staff can help identify what obstacles might get in the way of good sleep, like having trouble falling asleep, waking throughout the night, or taking substances like caffeine and energy drinks to force productivity.
- **Know when to stop:** There are times when everything gets so overwhelming the only option is to step away and take a break. Remind students that forcing themselves to work through the need for sleep or a break will eventually lead to a spiral that will shut down all their productive energy.
- **Don't let things pile up:** Encourage students to be aware of the tasks that they have put off, as they have a nasty way of sneaking back up on you all at once. While taking care of what is due first is a good starting place, they need to keep an eye on the backlog of assignments that may have been forgotten. One useful approach is keeping a list of tasks that can give a “dashboard” to look at to see what remains to be completed.
- **Limit distractions:** When students are working on a project or smaller assignment, they will work more productively by prioritizing the goal in front of them and limiting distractions such as text and DM alerts or music or television in the background.
- **Stay focused and keep your eyes on the prize:** There is a temptation to become distracted by smaller tasks that are easier to complete while ignoring the larger tasks that have a higher priority in terms of due date and impact. While taking a break from a larger task can be revitalizing, students need to avoid completing multiple small tasks that have more flexible due dates and putting off a larger task that has a more inflexible due date.